

Report #12/06/18/1102 – The Algonquin Trail Update

Summary of Stakeholder Meetings – Part 2

As promised, comments are noted anonymously. Staff and Council members took the opportunity to explain the situation to residents who had questions about various aspects of the situation. Most of those comments have not been recorded; where some have been included they are in brackets.

Each number below represents the comments from one individual unless identified otherwise.

1. I have printed notes....
 - a. We have a tremendous community – wilderness, hospitality, low population.
 - b. Council shouldn't be in competition to existing businesses.
 - c. The trail is not ours – we should have a committee to oversee how it operates in our community.
 - d. We need to be concerned about policing.
 - e. Can use ideas from other places.
 - f. We need signs – people need to slow down – education and signage goes a long way. There needs to be a shift in the culture. I know in the Barry area, they had problems with riders going through farmers' fields.

2. The machines making all that noise – they're not legal machines.
 - a. How can the clubs use those trails? Some of them are 300 feet straight down?
 - b. The Whitney Trail – a lot flatter, wider there – use with horseback and other uses.
 - c. Trail needs to be at least 15 feet with room on both sides for passing, other uses.
 - d. Motorized may be approved seasonally – different rules for night and day use.
 - e. We are users – as for safety – we do it consciously – watch out for others, slow down for kids, pull over. BUT – most people we meet don't do it.
 - f. The trail would need appropriate rest stops to prevent abuse, trash.

3. I have a different background; I come from the corporate world. I care about this community and its people.
 - a. For years there have been freight trains, racket, speed at crossings and contaminants going through your back yard with absolutely no benefit.
 - b. You have been given this blessed gift you need to determine how to use it and share it.
 - c. I was saddened to tears to hear how this all occurred – it shook the whole community.
 - d. I have the utmost respect for Council and staff, but I think they can use some help on this issue.

- e. My suggestion is to set up a task force of residents, who will report to Council – Council give it a mandate to gather ideas and concerns, everybody can attend, collect ideas and concerns.
- f. Work on solutions, the width of the trail, financials, safety, highway crossings, multi-use, skiing, etc..
- g. Talk to other communities and see how they are doing this? – It going through from Petawawa to Smith Falls. What are they doing?
- h. The Bruce trail is a success – what did they do? We could talk to them.
- i. What did they do to solve their problems?
- j. The municipal government should be setting up a framework, with rules – for the roll out.
- k. Let people prosper. It's not council's responsibility to solve all problems; the people should work to solve them. Council should provide a leadership role.
- l. Economic Development – government provides a framework – when you talk about profitability, I think that's a step too far. I would volunteer, perhaps for a second task force to help uncover business opportunities associated with increased traffic.
- m. Bring to council consolidated view of the issues. I would volunteer – I'm certain there are others.
- n. I'm sure there a lot of people with good ideas to help resolve issues – we can consult with OFSC and ATV Clubs.
- o. With patrolling – OFSC patrol people – have them vest up – stand beside trails to monitor – it would only take one weekend to make a difference – could be each weekend.
- p. With a task force – each person in the community, each resident will have the ability to share. At the end, everyone will have to live with what is decided. There will be people who are not happy.
- q. It should focus on residents of HCM, then move to the County level. The municipality will have a plan to move forward.
- r. We will work with staff to create terms of reference and determine how to work as a committee of council.
- s. Change is inevitable – some changes aren't quiet. We all have to take the good with the bad.

4. I have been on Snowmobile club for a long time.

- a. The rail line – carries on – council needs to be pro-active.
- b. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity – if it's missed once – it won't be back.
- c. You won't have it again.
- d. I know X & Y live adjacent – yeah I understand that things will go by and be disturbing, that make noise – but so did the train.
- e. The rail line predates most of these properties. If you move to an area, you come here to be outdoors, not be isolated from friendliness. The club allowed people to do that.
- f. Trail – lets people get to know their neighbours, brought people together, banding all of the communities. Groomed trails are the biggest generator of revenue for the area. Businesses spend money locally and put it back into the community – hire people. (staff questioned this statement)
- g. Changes to rules are taking business away – fishing and hunting – now if you take snowmobiling away. (we're not doing that)
- h. With the rail line – as a groomer operator – so easy to groom – other sections are dangerous.

- i. We have great trails – everyone has helped make them – our area – is known as one of the best areas in Ontario. We had no idea what was going to happen with the trail. It is snowmobile friendly – it is groomer friendly.
 - j. There are all kinds of opportunities with the trail. – people leveling the tracks, materials being used, trail patrols. Employment for the area for the future.
 - k. It might keep people employed – but where is the money coming from?
 - l. It would be a shame to not see it come to fruition.
 - m. The municipality should work with whoever is putting it through.
 - n. New businesses – multi-use can see opportunity. The demand is almost there – there will be economic impact – people hired to maintain the trail.
 - o. Once businesses are closed, they're lost.
5. I have typed notes I will provide to you...I think that multi-use will evolve based on use. We need to watch how other sections develop.
- a. I've snowshoed down Menet Lake Road over Family Day MLSC Fishing Derby and all machines I met slowed down, smiled and waved. I believe we can share the other trails too.
 - b. As for safety and security – it's the same as living along Highway 17.
 - c. We were here when the trains went by; they shook the house. And there were longer trains before the end.
 - d. Go to different websites around Ontario – there are a number of multi-use trails.
 - e. There are 250 of us who need to be considered.
 - f. Walking on trail – there is no problem at all.
 - g. Think about the trail as an emergency exit out of the community in the event of an accident – the highway closed – fire etc.
6. I don't think public funds should compete with private businesses. There is no need here. There is a saturation point for small businesses that we are not anywhere near. (so you want economic development but not competition?)
- a. I am a business owner and a resident.
 - b. Primarily – the question is who is going to be walking or cycling; for what sections, for how long – not many.
 - c. We are mistaken if we are thinking there will be an influx of tourism through HCM within the next 14 years.
 - d. I've seen how it works; how do we get here?
 - e. There is no influx of tourists. We don't see ATVer's looking for accommodation which would warrant any investment.
 - f. We don't need washrooms in Stonecliffe. It is a draw for YGS, we want them to go to the store to spend their money – to support local businesses.
 - g. Be careful where you put them.
 - h. There is no way to get investment in the trail without motorized use.
 - i. The county is looking for partners. If you make it non-motorized there will be no partners and therefore no money coming in.
 - j. Some people are using the trail whether it is legal or not.
 - k. We need a way to get through Stonecliffe.
 - l. As for a welcome centre – if the Petawawa forestry had to be shut down, how will it work here. People didn't stop. If it's not for the whole region – people won't use it.
 - m. You will have challenges for all season washrooms – showers, bathrooms – is there a need?

- n. Some people travel with their own tent? A yurt is not a separate business from existing accommodation businesses; they all provide overnight accommodation.
- o. I am happy to hear we would do a solid business case prior to investing municipal dollars, but if there is a business case, the private sector will invest.
- p. Tourism is a tough business to make money in. If we had to pay ourselves a salary we would be broke. It's a lifestyle. We hope to eventually sell the property to live on as a pension. It barely puts food on the table. (All home businesses are tough to make a living at.)
- q. I'm specifically addressing the business aspect. I've learned a hell of a lot, people don't want to pay. They don't understand costs.
- r. The people across from YGS, they opened a B&B, it didn't work.
- s. An increase in business from the trail will not make it work. Maybe in time. More people can come into the region.
- t. Tourism has grown over 10 years. We are at the saturation point at this time.
- u. The trail will not be the catalyst that will blow tourism up in the air. It's not going to happen.
- v. Development along the trail? – I'm not sure what that means? I don't see the county investing – they would need a reasonable business case.
- w. Can't think of the types of things they would support. Why put in a restaurant – you compete with the chip stand. I don't know their business but don't think they're making a fortune.
- x. I see a number of people going down the trail – it is an access mechanism – that's it.
- y. As for negative aspects – There are some but there are ways to mitigate them. Signage will help. Make people recognize that they're in a residential area.
- z. We need to let live, to grow – we don't have all the answers now. There will be a lot more issues – as this rolls out south of us. We can learn from them.
- aa. We do not have a duty to solve problems before we go any further. Do what we can, what we know. Learn and try to do better.
- bb. I know there will be huge costs. What about grading – culverts? There is a section of the rail under the water.
- cc. Let's be realistic it will be a long time before the county sets its sites on our area.
- dd. We will have more innovative thoughts in 12 months.
- ee. As for noise, make the trail the right of way; its acceleration that's the problem not speed.
- ff. I don't see whether bollards or whatever can help – they will still have to accelerate.
- gg. Make sure the speed limit is only 20 km/h.
- hh. The trail only crosses one municipal road, if you did not force the machines to slow down, it would go a long way to reduce the noise.
- ii. Get the speed down and then try to minimize the stop and starting.

- 7. I think that it will be a long time before the real development of the trail here.
 - a. Who is going to pay for it?
 - b. MLSC has never had the intent to lease the whole rail line? We are satisfied with that we had done so far.

- c. Who is going to pay to construct to a state that is usable? Is safe?
- d. The ATVers are going to come. Do they have money to make improvements?
- e. As a multi-purpose trail the club would only use parts. For example, if we are impacted by logging for a certain section of roads, we may use a certain section for this year and then not again for 5 years.
- f. I agree with the suggestions for washrooms and visitor centres. We need to maintain the existence of the store – it is important to the community. The washrooms at Lacroix Park are a mess.
- g. I don't think that the townships should be in business. What we need in the county is better internet. Something cheaper – less weather dependant. As for the Café – the first weekend was good – after that – not a great turnout. We don't have a large volunteer base to draw from.
- h. Not sure what you mean by development along the trail?
- i. I don't have any negative concerns. People will make the trail what it is.
- j. Snowmobilers come because we are a link. They will come no matter what is here. They're going to come anyway.
- k. At the latest Snow Country and ATV meetings – they're not even talking about coming up here. All of their plans are about the trails in the east.
- l. There is a sub-lease from CN, they have a lot of work to do as a club in the Barron Canyon area.
- m. They didn't talk at all about coming up here.
- n. I think there is a lack of understanding on everyone's part – we didn't see the big picture.
- o. There were trains going through. We all moved here with the trains.
- p. I remember it was so bad with the trains, there were 2 people in a small car who got stuck on the tracks – they had to cut the bumps down.
- q. A lot of people moved here because we camped.
- r. There are people who are afraid to walk on trails that snowmobiles are on. A person would be noticed.
- s. Our businesses are dying because we can't get to them.
- t. We are a part of the RAP trail – that is big business.

There are 243 trail permits sold for the Missing Link Snowmobile Club. There is no way of knowing how many are residents or property owners without going through the lists of addresses. Even then, we cannot be certain they don't own property here.

- 8. We use a system of bush trails which we would like to connect with the Algonquin Trail.
 - a. Our position is that we don't force locals to buy permits – we encourage it and try to sell the value in buying a permit.
 - b. We normally use Crown lands, logging roads, for people who have lived here their entire life – we can't stop them from using the road – they can continue to ride. It is different from the OFSC.
 - c. We like to focus on education – speed, safety of crossing of municipal roads, signage.
 - d. We have a program – trainer trains new riders.
 - e. During dry seasons we encourage – no smoking on the trail, fire safety – exhaust inhibitors.

- f. We don't see a challenge with access around Stonecliffe instead of through.
- g. We would sign a Memorandum of Understanding – signage.
- h. We have insurance – indemnification of private property – same policy as the OFSC.
- i. We would work with you to create a list of by-law – roads where access is allowed – enter into an agreement with the municipality – anything other than in the by-law is not covered.
- j. An MOU would be signed similar to the one you sign with OFSC.
- k. If there are issues – residents – call OPP. With increased traffic, you would increase signage.
- l. We can work together – we can host functions in coordination with the municipality.
- m. We can help with installing gates that slow down users.
- n. As an example – Laurentian Hills has a good by-law with posted speed limits.

9. If council makes a decision we will live with it. (You shouldn't have to live with duress.)

- a. We've heard about a possible ATV club. Then we'll have to hear this all year round instead of just the winter. They're already using the trail all summer.
- b. We have no problem supporting the trail – we don't want to lose our right to say what's happening in our community.
- c. Is there a way to increase the number of trail wardens?

10. Noise is a huge issue. I live outside. I don't want to hear that whining all the time.

- a. Who is going to fund the trail into the future?
- b. To take care of outhouses? Garbage? Policing?
- c. They say they can post speeds of 20 km/h – you still need some way to slow them down.

11. We chose to live here because of the peace and quiet.

- a. We can hear the whining from inside our home.
- b. Crossings are dangerous.

12. Can we have gates installed? To slow machines down?

- a. We know that some people aren't happy with the current highway crossing – that when trucks go over it, it shakes their house.
- b. I don't see why they need to come through Stonecliffe? There are alternate routes.

13. We've talked to people, with the trails the way they are, and with the machines being used today, it's nothing to go through from Ottawa to North Bay in a day. There is no need to stop here. Same as with the RAP trail.

- a. As for Raj and YGS – that store has succeeded for years before there was talk of moving the trail – that's not going to change.

14. Future of trails in HCM – it's a natural playground – keep that in mind.

- a. Development – We have 3 or 4 year round business. There is potential for the place across from YGS. A four season business that you don't have now.
- b. That was the problem with Air Swisha – Loon Valley residents said No. That was not good. They should have allowed it to go through but a group of residents stopped it, not looking ahead. The municipality should develop as much as they can; to increase the tax base, diversity, need businesses. (explained current tax rates)
- c. Municipally owned business. Sometimes when you have something run by the municipality you lose money.
- d. It's a good idea to look at for the township, so long as you don't take business away from other businesses.
- e. Policing of Trails and the OPP. Need to make good use of trail wardens – the clubs will need to provide them. They then need to call the OPP.
- f. The trails are dangerous – the slope, the rock cliffs, there will need to be guard rails – some sort of safety board to make sure they're used throughout effected areas. (by-law enforcement officer – sled and ATV)
- g. Development of trails – motorized, horses, skiing – have to separate trails through the municipality; there will be different sections with different costs.
- h. The money will come from the snowmobilers and atvers. So the county is bending to them.
- i. Need an agreement with the snowmobile club - should have a formal agreement for the use of all municipal roads. Indemnification – county and clubs.
- j. What else are they going to allow? Dirt bikes, cross country skis. East End lands in Deep River – signage – snow machines don't go there.

15. We should have a toll booth at each end so that instead of council raising our taxes it can be improved and not cost us.

- a. The county with this mixed and multi-use is stupid talk.
- b. What about fire. Will the trail be wide enough for a fire truck? A cigarette flipped away in the summer, same as along the highway – it's a wind tunnel –

with dry grass during a dry season – will burn all the way between the trail and river.

- c. The people who endorsed this, any costs should come out of their pockets. Emon – the County of Renfrew – are they going to put out garbage bins and make sure they're bear proof?
- d. I suggest a toll per vehicle, no matter what type.
- e. Noise – it's not too bad where I am – there is a berm that mutes it.
- f. As for businesses – we already have a lot – for anything else, it would cost too much money.
- g. Repair – there are culverts west of Stonecliffe, where I go to get minnows, the bottom is gone. Have they really considered the costs of repairing all of these?
- h. And if they're going to use our taxes to do work on this project, the taxes should be the same all the way down the trail.
- i. It's supposed to be revenue neutral but the county is taking on extra taxes to pay for this.
- j. For a walking trail, they will need crushed rock or crusher dust. The costs are a poor outlook for our area. Petawawa is OK, they are all government funded with military.
- k. If there is a trail, who knows, I might buy a 4 wheeler and use it. I'd put up a gate and a fence – do it myself so no-one could get on my property.
- l. My main concerns are fire, debris and garbage.